

Testimony on SB143  
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I was in attendance last session when Sen. Brenden's earlier bison bill was heard in this committee. That bill was less extreme than today's bill, and it did not become law.

Yesterday, I downloaded and reviewed the audio transcript of Sen. Brenden's testimony to this committee from 2011.

He repeatedly made reference that if we allow wild buffalo in Montana, **"there will be a war"**.

Well he was right, there is a war! It's a War on Wildlife being waged in the legislature at the behest of the radical fringe of the ranching industry.

The radical War on Wildlife is manifesting itself with a bill to ban bighorn sheep transplants, another to create an elk capture, test, and slaughter program when elk are inconveniencing livestock producers, and now we have SB143 – The "shoot 'em at the border" bill. The legislative War on Wildlife is real.

As I read through Senate Bill 143, and came to the section of use of firearms to dispatch bison, I thought "why stop there"? Let's authorize use of National Guard tanks, and Apache helicopters to exterminate Yellowstone bison as they step across the state line.

This bill is EXTREME. The mere introduction of this bill is an embarrassment for our state, and if this bill attracts national media attention, it has the potential to do great harm to Montana's highly lucrative, and rapidly growing tourism industry. Economies thrive on diversity, and this unnecessary bill will negatively impact our state's tourism business, while doing essentially nothing to benefit the livestock industry. We should be nurturing tourism in every way we can.

In 2010, the Interagency Bison Management Partners authorized the formation of a Bison Citizens Working Group of which I am a member. It was comprised of a cross section of Montanans, including moderate members of the ranching industry, Jim Hagenbarth (Dillon), Lorents Grosfield (Big Timber), and Ariel Overstreet (staffer with Montana Stockgrowers Association).

We met monthly for 2 years, during which time we did what the legislature does – we discussed and deliberated, AND recognizing that survey's have show that 68% of Montanans favor wild bison. WE COMPROMISED, and problem solved, with a lot of effort to satisfy all of the diverse interests.

Recently, the CWG presented its consensus recommendations regarding wild bison - some highlights of which included:

1. expanded habitat for bison – outside the Park in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem AS A MANAGED SPECIES
2. respect for private property rights, and
3. recognizing the concerns of livestock producers



The extreme position that SB143 represents is a slap in the face to the 40+ citizens who invested much time and energy to come up with equitable solutions. I believe that legislators, as representatives of our entire citizenry, have an obligation to respect the work of the CWG, and SB 143 is emphatically not the way to show that support.

Finally, I think its important – to assist you in your deliberations and your questions for Senator Brenden - for the committee to hear a couple of additional quotes from Senator Brenden:

On January 20, 2011 Senator Brenden testified before this committee that he acknowledged that there has, **“never been a brucellosis transmission from bison to ... livestock”**, and that bison are **“a little hard to manage”**. This is Senator Brenden speaking!

Senator Brenden went on to say that the real problem is **“buffalo getting through fences”**. So **that’s the reason for Sen. Brenden’s “War on Wildlife” - that we’re going to shoot bison at the border ... because they might damage a fence?**

In closing I’ll offer one final quote from Senator Brenden’s 2011 committee hearing ... he said, **“I’ve been fighting dialogue all my life”**.

So the approach of SB143 is “my way or the highway”. No dialogue and no compromise. It’s a bill based on fear, anger, and emotion. I urge the committee to table this bill – you will be saving Montana from the embarrassment of this bill – protecting our livestock industry and our tourism industry from the wrath that it will generate. And Senator Brenden, I think that my beloved state of Montana would be best served by you withdrawing this bill.